



St. Lucie County Legislative Update

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Our Mission....

To provide service, infrastructure and leadership necessary to advance a safe and sustainable community, maintain a high quality of life, and protect the natural environment for all our citizens.

SCOTT PROPOSES \$180 MILLION TAX CUT

With an expected bid for U.S. Senate looming, Gov. Rick Scott wants \$180 million worth of cuts in both taxes and fees during his final year in office.



Scott also announced in August that he will propose an amendment to Florida's Constitution to make it harder for politicians to raise taxes by requiring a supermajority vote by future Florida legislatures to raise any taxes or fees.

Scott wants a 10-day back to school tax holiday where residents would not pay sales taxes on clothes or school supplies. He also wants three separate week-long tax holidays where residents would be able to buy storm preparation supplies tax-free.

The governor is also proposing cutting the price of renewing a driver's license by more than half, and wants to cut the price paid when people get their first Florida driver's license.

The governor's bid for cuts in taxes and fees comes amid the reality of a tight budget year. Florida was projected to have only a small surplus heading into next year, but has been forced to pay out more than \$600 million in expenses related to Hurricane Irma. Top legislators have already been warning that they may go ahead with a bare-bones budget that does not include money for new university and college buildings or traditional hometown projects.

Scott last week, however, insisted the state's economy is still growing enough that legislators can afford some level of tax cuts.

BRADLEY'S FLORIDA FOREVER BILL PASSES 1ST PANEL

The new Senate budget chairman's bill (SB 370) requiring \$100 million be appropriated annually to Florida Forever passed its first committee.

The Senate Environmental Preservation and Conservation Committee passed the bill Monday.

Florida Forever money is used for a variety of issues including land acquisition, environmental restoration and conservation easements.

Sen. Rob Bradley, R-Fleming Island, was coincidentally named to the coveted spot, Chair of Appropriations, the same day. He also chairs that environmental committee.

The bill has two more stops, including Senate Appropriations, on its way to the floor. The bill does not yet have a House companion.

Click the links below



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**CRA REFORM STARTS TO MOVE IN THE SENATE**

Legislation to reform community redevelopment agencies -- organizations created by local governments to clean up slums and blighted areas -- started to move in the Senate Tuesday.

The Senate Community Affairs Committee passed Sen. Tom Lee's SB 432 on a 5-1 vote.

It requires each CRA to use the same procurement and purchasing processes as the county or municipality that created them and requires a CRA to provide its proposed budget to county officials with 10 days of adoption, among a long list of other reforms, according to the staff analysis.

Sen. Daphne Campbell, the sole no vote, objected to the bill on the grounds that it would eliminate CRAs in the future, but the sponsor said she may have been thinking of last year's bill.

"There is nothing in here that phases out CRAs... This is a completely different piece of legislation that's based on the auditor general's report, it's based upon the OPPAGA report, and it's based in some part on a grand jury investigation that occurred in your county that found that CRAs were actually corrupt," Lee responded.

The House version of the bill, HB 17, does have a provision to eliminate CRAs 20 years from now.

BILL LIMITING LOCAL TAX REFERENDUMS

Legislation that forces local governments to hold sales tax referendum only on the date of a primary or general election was approved by a House committee in Tallahassee, reports Mitch Perry of FloridaPolitics.com.

Sponsored by Spring Hill Republican Blaise Ingoglia, the bill (HB 317) is similar to other proposals to come before the Legislature in recent years but failed to make it to the governor's desk.

An amendment, introduced by Ingoglia and passed Wednesday by the House Local, Federal and Veteran Affairs Subcommittee, removes the requirement that such a measure needed a county commission supermajority before it goes to voters. If the measure is put on a primary ballot, the bill also requires 60 percent approval from voters. If on the general election ballot, it only needs a simple majority.

"I think that expanding it to make sure that more of the voters have a say on whether a major increase, specifically on a sales tax occurs, is the right thing to do," Rep. Joseph Abruzzo, a Democrat, said.

Ingoglia also said that there have been abuses by local governments have made "political" decisions in order to get a sales tax passed.

"Many times they'll make the political decision to put it on a special election ballot," he said. "Special election ballots have notoriously low turnout, sometimes twenty, twenty-two, twenty-five percent."

"If we're going ask ourselves to tax ourselves," Ingoglia said, "let's have the maximum voter participation possible."

PRESIDENT NEGRON NAMES NEW APPROPRIATIONS CHAIR

On Monday, while the independent, third party investigation regarding Senator Latvala is pending, Senate President Negron has temporarily reassigned the chairmanships of the Senate Committee on Appropriations to Senator Rob Bradley, and the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Tourism and Economic Development to Senator Wilton Simpson.

Senator Rob Bradley resides in Fleming Island located in Clay County, near the Jacksonville metropolitan area.

